

Let's Write a Bill

Appropriate for grade 4 (adaptable to higher grades).

Overview: Students will research the path a bill takes to become a law and will write and email an effective narrative to a state representative proposing an idea for a bill.

Purpose: To reinforce the concept of Democracy – that everyone has a say in his/her government.

Materials: Pencil and paper for students.
Access to a computer with an internet connection.

Procedure: Read and discuss “How a Bill Becomes a Law” (<http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy/webtest/capitolclassroom/6-8HowABill.htm#HowABill>).

- ❖ Talk about the path a bill takes to become a law. Emphasize the importance individual citizens play in the development of a bill.
- ❖ Discuss why the governor has the right to veto a bill, why the House of Delegates and Senate may vote into law a vetoed bill, why the Judicial Branch may deem a law unconstitutional, etc.
- ❖ Role-play a fictitious bill's path through the state legislature by assigning the following roles: concerned citizen, senator or delegate, House of Delegates, Senate of Virginia, Governor and Court.
- ❖ Ask the students to think of an idea for a bill that would be of importance to them. Make sure they consider the Constitution when thinking of their ideas.
- ❖ Ask students to write a letter to their senator or delegate proposing their idea for a bill. The letter must be in proper form, be logical, and be persuasive.
- ❖ Edit the letters with classmates and teacher.
- ❖ Go online and research the name and email address of the senator or delegate for the school (<http://legis.state.va.us/vaonline.v.htm>).
- ❖ Students will then type and email their letters to their senator or delegate.

Class Discussion Questions:

Why do we have district representatives?

Why do we have a state government?

Why does a Governor have the right to veto a bill?

Why do the House and Senate have the right to vote into law a vetoed bill?
Why do laws have to be constitutional?
How can one convince the General Assembly to pass a bill?

This lesson plan was written by Alexandra Wall, Spring Hill Elementary School (Fairfax County, Virginia).

Source: "A Commonwealth of Knowledge" website:
www.knowledge.state.va.us/main/lesson/les.cfm